

# POWER TOOL

## Social Movements

Social movements are a critical vehicle for change around the world, including in many countries where CARE operates. **This Power Tool provides guidance on how CARE can engage in strategic partnerships with social movement actors based on the work of CARE in Latin America and the Caribbean (CARE LAC) to promote dignified work for domestic workers and advance their rights.** Since 2010, CARE LAC has partnered with domestic workers activists and social movement actors to fight for fair work conditions and basic rights, including in countries where CARE does not have a physical Country Office presence such as Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. This approach to scaling impact through partnering with social movement actors has broken new ground for the organization as it represents a new way of working with activists and social movements.

This Power Tool is intended to strengthen CARE's capacity to support and enhance relationships with social movement actors globally, and **not** to position CARE as a leader or builder of movements. As an international organization, CARE should not be framed as a builder or leader of movements in recognition of power relations relative to activists in these spaces. Rather, **CARE's contribution to social movements is most effective when implemented through the following four roles:**

**convener, ally, resource partner, and amplifier.**

These roles have been identified as the most meaningful and impactful contributions that CARE can make in support of a social movement.

The impact of these partnerships are evident as the movement has celebrated impressive advocacy wins, including the ratification of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 189, the first international legal document that specifically protects the rights of domestic workers, and more recently, the adoption of ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work and its respective Recommendations, which were shaped through direct involvement of domestic workers associations and labor unions from the region.

By looking to the work of CARE LAC, this Power Tool embraces the potential CARE can play in accompanying movements in a way that is authentic and respectful of their autonomy and agenda while contributing to the growth and success of the movement.

### Understanding Social Movements:

CARE understands a social movement as **"an organized set of people vested in making a change in their situation pursuing a common political agenda through collective action."** Research has shown that major social change only occurs when those who have been excluded from power - i.e., the world's most vulnerable - organize and rise to challenge existing systems and their impact. Social movements have led some of the most critical shifts in global politics - from the end of apartheid in South Africa to ensuring women's right to vote in the United States. They are nimble entities that often take years to develop (for example, the domestic workers' movement in Latin America is over a century old) and require autonomy and agency in order to thrive. They have historically been one of the most important factors in achieving social justice.

**Through research and listening activities with activists in Latin America, CARE identified four potential roles for engaging with social movements:**

- 1. Convener:** As a convener, CARE can play an important role in bringing various stakeholders together and providing space for exchange. CARE can leverage its position as a large INGO to connect those who otherwise may not have the opportunity to connect, such as domestic workers advocating for better working conditions and influential policy makers or social movement actors operating in different countries with diverse political and social contexts so that they can share learning and experiences across countries and regions.
- 2. Ally:** This role is rooted in solidarity and a shared vision of justice. It requires decentralizing the agenda of the INGO and, instead, centralizing the role of the movement actors in determining the agenda and other critical decisions. Under this role, CARE can connect local movements to policy processes at the regional or global level, may facilitate opportunities and strategic links with the sole intention of benefiting the movement.
- 3. Resource Partner:** The role of resource partner is one in which the organization supports the movement by providing resources needed and identified by movement actors. This is one of the predominant roles that CARE LAC plays in their support for the domestic workers' movement. While this can include providing funding, office space and supplies, funding participation in conferences/events, and covering transportation needs, it is important to allow the movement actors to identify the needed resources themselves rather than providing pre-defined resources/support. Of course, there should be accountability mechanisms in place to ensure resources are being used in line with the agreed framework, and the necessary due diligence should be conducted beforehand (where possible) to ensure CARE has given the approval of funds and has the systems in place to provide funding. As you determine the actors who will be receiving the resources, consider their representativeness of the impact group and the goals of the partnership and the context to ensure alignment and accountability. Be sure to also consider that CARE may not be the only resource partner, or that our support may be time-bound. Resources allocated to one organization may also disrupt the relation with others or its environment, the support provided should take that into consideration.
- 4. Amplifier:** As an amplifier, an organization amplifies the role of a movement/the voice of movement actors by bringing its message to new and larger forums, including global media outlets, donors, and inviting activists to spaces they historically do not have access to. Social media is one popular space for INGOs to act as an amplifier but it is not the only space that the message of movement actors can be amplified. A large INGO can also amplify the role of a movement by inviting movement actors to speak and participate in national or international conferences, events, and decision-making spaces and processes, connecting them to the current national, regional or global agendas in a coherent manner, including those on development like the SDGs or in human rights mechanisms like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ( CEDAW).

**While these roles are presented above as four separate roles, the type of support needed can be a combination of these roles or can shift from one role to another as the context changes.** These roles can all make critical contributions to social movements, so it's important to keep communication lines open to ensure that movement actors are receiving the type of support they need at that moment. CARE LAC successfully acts as one or more of these roles at different times throughout its relationship with the domestic workers' movement.

## Things to Consider Before Getting Started:

As a large international organization, CARE needs to approach work with social movements very carefully as to not disrupt the movement or actors. Here are a few things to consider before supporting a social movement in your context:

**1. Before supporting a social movement, you must be prepared to align your agenda with the goals of the movement.**

**Do not have a pre-established agenda about the goals or the support you will offer.** CARE can play an important role in supporting a movement, but we can also harm the movement if our engagement is not approached carefully. Because of this, it is important to make sure that CARE's agenda aligns with the goals of the movement. In any case, CARE's ultimate agenda should be amplifying and scaling-up the impact and should be prepared to adjust to align with the agenda of social movement actors. It is important to first take time to watch the space and listen to these actors in order to best understand their goals.

**Example:** CARE LAC identified the need to support the domestic workers' movement in the region because of the exploitative working conditions that subject domestic workers to unfair compensation, bad working environments, and physical and sexual violence and harassment. In order to define how to support the domestic workers' movement, CARE LAC hired a Nicaraguan feminist researcher to survey movement leaders about their goals and how they wanted CARE to support their efforts. The central question was, "What does CARE need to do to work with movement leaders and organizations as agents of change rather than as aid recipients?" The answers were clear: support the movement without a pre-established agenda and be transparent with the movement about its intentions. CARE chose to support the established goals of the movement and follow their vision of justice which established the foundation for an authentic relationship of mutual trust for the long-term, rather than within a short-term project model. Their goals included:

- Connecting domestic workers' rights groups, organizations and leaders from across the region to advocate under a common umbrella and unified platform;
- Advocate for the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 189 to advance the rights of domestic workers, in coalition with domestic workers' groups and leaders;
- Provide strategic and legal analysis as well as leadership and advocacy training for domestic workers; and
- Amplify the messages of the domestic workers' movement through a comprehensive media campaign that tells the stories of domestic workers and utilizes evidence to advance their cause

**2. Invest long-term. As you plan to support movements, ensure that your organization intends to support the activists for the long run.**

While social movements may seem to be spontaneous eruptions of political energy, they actually are a result of deliberate actions and coordinated events planned by individuals in reaction to social demands and historical struggles, as well as specific political contexts. As a responsible and trustworthy partner, it is important that organizations understand that their relationship with social movements should be sustainable, consistent, and reliable.

**Example:** During a workshop with leaders of the Latin American domestic workers' movement in 2017, many said that they have come to expect exploitation and extractive relationships with outside entities such as international organizations and researchers. Often academics and nonprofit professionals become "experts" on the domestic workers' movement after conducting research and this research rarely has any real material benefit to the individual movement leaders or organizations who provided the information in the first place.

*“We know we are not experts in many things but we are in many others. When [NGOs work on] formulating project proposals sometimes we feel under scrutiny; we are the ones who have the knowledge, who have the work experience, who understand the organization’s dynamics and where we want to go. But they hire external professionals, and what they do is, first they “read you.” Since they don’t know the organization [...] they take from you as much information as possible in order to understand. [...] It’s not only a CARE problem, but of all NGOs; when people come to learn about the dynamics of indigenous people, they dig deep and they take advantage of it [...] because later they become the experts on indigenous people, and who are we? We aren’t experts.”*

—Guatemalan indigenous leader, Juana Sales Morales

It was important that CARE LAC did not replicate these negative interactions. Thus, CARE works to build interactions with movements that represent a long-term commitment in order to avoid extractive dynamics and instead move towards collaboration by sharing research findings and analysis of their policy asks with the activists themselves.

- 3. Be patient. Do not set the pace of the relationship and do not expect things to happen quickly.** “Solidarity is built at the speed of trust.” Social movements can take years, even decades, to see tangible impact. Patience is one of the most important parts of a successful relationship with movements and movement actors without losing sight of the partnership and movement’s goal.

**Example:** CARE LAC took their time in building the relationship with the movement. As one activist explained: “The most logical thing is to map, to scan the area to see what is already there, what the needs are and start by strengthening those that are already more organized. Go slowly, and listen to see how we feel in order to enter. Understand deeply, that way it’s easier to work later on, like when you are preparing the soil to plant, first you clear the ground, add fertilizer and then you sow the seed.”

- 4. Do your homework. Understand the internal and external dynamics of power and power relations when engaging with the movement.** Working within and alongside social movements means entering into a complex web of relationships, personalities, and power dynamics. Social movements consist of a series of social networks and often have many leaders so it is important for a partner to understand the order of operations before diving in. Moreover, there is a lot of distrust within movements of external actors. For example, many activists are voicing a concern that nonprofits favor the priorities of funders and government bodies over the interests of activists. NGOs are criticized for working on behalf of and remaining accountable to those with money or power rather than those who are most marginalized. These power dynamics can cause tension when brokering a relationship and it is important to study and acknowledge them before building your relationship with social movement actors. It is important to remain read into the political context as social movements may also play an important role in the political agenda, particularly during elections. A healthy relationship requires mutual respect between actors (non-condescending and not one of serving the other’s needs) and thus it is important to regularly revisit the analysis on relationships and power between different stakeholders, including CARE and our relationships.

**Example:** CARE staff had to take extra care when initiating relationships with movement leaders in order to earn the trust of movement actors. CARE recognized that the domestic workers’ movement existed within a broader context of exploitation and unequal power dynamics, and that CARE had its own complicated history, reputation and position as a large international NGO. This required CARE to be very conscious and careful in their approach. As CARE’s work with the Latin American domestic workers’ movement has taken on a more relational and committed character, CARE has, inevitably, encountered internal movement tensions and divisions especially between the various unions. It is critical that these dynamics are acknowledged and worked around in order to not disrupt some of the natural politics of the movement.

## Key Steps to Supporting a Social Movement

### 1. Map the key players in the movement.

Identify the key players of the movement and their relationships to one another taking into account the political and social context in the region and country. Remember that many key actors are informal – meaning, they are not listed nonprofits or government entities. Informal groups are often the starting point of activism and should not be overlooked. This will ensure that critical dynamics between stakeholders are considered as the relationship is developed. This will also help identify gaps and think through potential new partnerships. Once the activists are mapped, periphery players such funders, government officials, and other powerholders can be added. One of the assets of CARE's involvement in the domestic workers' movement is that CARE promoted alliances and facilitated direct communication and relationships between movement leaders and other entities including government officials, foundations, NGOs, civil society organizations, decision-makers, etc. This mapping can be done internally but should be shared externally for input and to ensure there are no significant gaps. The mapping is a living document that should be amended as the work progresses.



Local activists gather in Quito in June 2017 to discuss their shared vision of success.

### 2. Start with listening.

As the relationship with social movements build, make sure your organization is mostly asking questions and listening carefully to the answers. Ask how you can help rather than assuming that you are being helpful. CARE LAC's success is partially due to their efforts taking time to learn the unique dynamics, players, relationships and needs/ hopes of movement leaders and organizations in each country. Potential questions to ask activists include:

- *What are your current priorities and tactics to achieve your goals?*
- *What are the largest gaps and obstacles in your movements?*
- *What is your experience, if any, with engaging with large institutions or INGOs?*
- *What are the current risks that you are facing in your work?*
- *How can we help you and your movement move forward towards its vision of social justice?*

### 3. Adjust your internal systems and processes, particularly administrative or financial systems, that create delays or blockades to true partnership. Replace with flexible systems that still allow for accountability and promote sustainability.

It is important to be aware of CARE's internal processes and systems, including administrative and financial systems for setting up partnerships, and recognize when it is posing obstacles or perpetuating unequal partnership dynamics. Based on CARE LAC's work, we know that our internal systems can delay or block our ability to partner with social movement actors in meaningful and empowering ways. As CARE LAC faced these obstacles, they were creative in developing alternative systems that are more flexible and allow for informal community-based organizations to become partners while promoting accountability. This includes CARE's due diligence process which makes it difficult to compensate informal actors for their work because they do not meet formal requirements

#### Best Practices in Action:

The model of compensating activists by hiring them as consultants or vendors rather than as a partner was successfully applied in CARE Cote D'Ivoire with youth advocates. This enabled CARE to hire the right advocates rather than those that would be easiest to partner with based on existing systems, and it empowered youth advocates by giving them more social capital as 'consultants' rather than 'partners' or advocates. CARE Cote D'Ivoire also worked with youth advocates and their organizations to formalize and meet the formal organization requirements in the country in order to better position them in the political context more broadly.

which are often a result of limited resources and social capital to access formal spaces and a reflection of larger inequalities. CARE LAC recognized this limitation and hired social movement actors that did not meet the formal requirements of the due diligence process as vendors/consultants in order to compensate them for their work while maintaining accountability systems. CARE also worked with our social movement actors to develop a due diligence process for their partnerships with smaller organizations in their context. This was the case of the Latin American Confederation of Domestic Workers (CONLACTRAHO), who is a regional CARE partner based in Mexico, and their partners at the country level who are not CARE partners. Building a trusting relationship allowed CARE to understand CONLACTRAHO's goals and relationships and vision. As a result, CARE LAC was able to reframe the due diligence requirement to find other ways to support them, including through the consultancy model. This required a strong commitment from CARE to make sure goals are achieved, as well as flexibility to work around our internal systems in a way that achieves our impact goals while maintaining accountability.

The partnership of mutual support can be applied to other aspects, such as monitoring and evaluation processes where it is important to find alternative ways to collect information in order to stay accountable. For example, the CARE LAC team often relied on face to face interactions or calls rather than written reports to collect data and updates. At the same time, it is important to share processes that local organizations can benefit from such as learning about reporting methodologies that strengthen their standing with donors / partners.

**4. Understand and clearly define your role in the work. Is your organization a convener, ally, resource partner, or amplifier?**

In Latin America, CARE's role vis-a-vis the movement is well-defined: providing technical and financial assistance and facilitating processes in order to build the capacity of movement leaders and their organizations. As an organization listens to a movement, it has to start defining its relationship with that movement. The four roles referenced above (convener, ally, resource partner, or amplifier) provide a framework for ways that CARE can support movement actors and activists.

The role may evolve as needs change, so be prepared to meet the needs of movement actors as they change. For example, CARE LAC primarily acts as a resource partner but they also have played the role of convener and amplifier at different times based on opportunities and needs. Any shifts in support should be discussed closely with movement actors, and you should establish ways to check in with movement actors to ensure you continue to play the most relevant role.

**5. Propose some potential projects or opportunities to the movement actors and then adjust based on the feedback.**

While the movement actors are the ones to set the terms of the agenda, the labor of the work does not sit entirely with them. Once your organization has listened intently and learned the fundamentals of the movement, take that information and start building potential projects or opportunities. If you see yourself as a convener, propose a workshop or conference. If you are more of an amplifier, draft some language you will use on your social media or in a meeting with stakeholders that will amplify the work of the movement actors. Bring those proposals to the movement actors to seek input and then edit and adjust according to their feedback. This will ensure a more collaborative and useful process and product.

**6. Commit to a long-term relationship and do not shy away from the tough questions.**

This work requires an explicit commitment to a long-term relationship with the movement. CARE LAC staff have demonstrated this commitment to the work and found ways to maintain relationships and support, despite periods of uncertain support from CARE International. They are also willing to address conflict within the movement and facilitate processes of conflict resolution with a focus on building a stronger, more unified movement. CARE willingly sought feedback on their role in the movement and listened to constructive feedback about how they were engaging.

### 7. Seek out other potential partners or resources.

One of the most useful components of the CARE LAC partnership with movement actors was their ability to connect activists to new partners and resources. Once you have a sense of what the social movement needs, check your own networks and see if there any connections you can make for the movement. There may be skills or opportunities outside of your own organization that will be useful to the movement actors.

### 8. Assess impact and share the results with the movement actors.

The process of monitoring and evaluating impact can be tedious endeavor and many activists may not have the time or resources to undertake it, although you shouldn't assume their strengths and needs without discussion. If your organization has the resources to measure impact, offer them to the movement actors. **Whether it is measuring the impact of the movement itself or of your specific partnership, it is useful insight for the movement. Make sure to share those results with movement actors! Transparency of data is a critical part of building trust.** When possible, invite movement actors to inform the research questions and/or define what success looks like to ensure the measurement systems align with their goals and that the data collected can support the movement more broadly.

### 9. Re-assess your role and adjust as needed.

CARE LAC has continuously evolved its relationship with the domestic workers' movement. At times, it has been a silent partner and at times it has led campaigns and initiatives. The team makes space to adjust based on the best interest of the movement actors. Make sure to re-assess your relationship and see if your organization is still playing a role that maximizes assistance and minimizes harm. If you have to change the type of role that you are playing, do so with the input of the movement actors. At least once every six months, schedule a check-in with movement actors and facilitate a conversation to receive feedback and assess if there's need to re-define your role and the support needed.

## Potential challenges and risks

As is the case with all of CARE's work, there are potential challenges and risks associated with engaging with social movements. Below are a few general potential challenges, but you should conduct your own risk assessment to identify areas specific to your context.

**Understand and Manage Risks.** In many contexts, activism can quickly become an issue of risk management. As activism in many countries is further criminalized and new legislation is created to crackdown on social movement activity, movement leaders and activists face threats to their physical security. Furthermore, the more that an organization assumes the role of a movement "player," the greater risks the organization and its staff faces. In light of these issues, CARE should conduct a country-by-country risk assessment, and develop risk management and security plans. The actions taken as part of the partnership should not by any means expose activist or social leaders or compromise their safety. In restrictive political scenarios, the risk analysis should include larger advocacy processes with more complicated actors.

**Assist in building a well of knowledge and research.** As a partnering organization, you should endorse new research to provide updated and more accurate data on the conditions of movement actors in each country and on policy implementation and enforcement (or the lack thereof and why). Due to the informal nature of movements, as well as the huge amount of work that activists are already undertaking, there is a drought of information on movement-building and its impact. The lack of reliable data makes it difficult to measure impact and that is a challenge for both movement actors and their partners when trying to strategize next steps. A major challenge is finding data that is useable or research that is backed by movement actors themselves in a format that is accessible with their base. As an international organization, we can connect social movements to broader opportunities that could be linked through research and dissemination.

## IN-DEPTH LOOK:

### CARE LAC's partnership with the Domestic Worker's Movement

The domestic workers' movement in the Latin American region has been organizing since the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. CARE LAC started working with the domestic workers organizations in the late 2000s after recognizing that domestic workers were one of the most vulnerable populations in the region and that domestic work was carried out in conditions of severe exploitation. Yet, the domestic workers' organizing efforts received little or no support from non-government organizations. The issue of paid and unpaid domestic work was one that was largely absent from public debate, and in most countries, public policies did not address it properly, if at all. In 2010, a new Gender Advisor for Latin America was hired and CARE LAC started a year of learning and initial conversations with women and domestic workers' organizations in several countries across the region to express the desire to support them. As CARE LAC built these relationships, the use of the sexual division of labor as an analytical framework became increasingly important for the organization, and a toolbox was developed to evaluate their work as they deepened their accompaniment of the domestic workers' movement. After a year of exploration, an evaluation was conducted of the work done that included domestic workers from Peru and Ecuador. In this evaluation it became clear that the sexual division of labor provided a distinct lens to understand the problems domestic workers faced, to achieve shared responsibility, and to increase the visibility and valuation of domestic workers' social and economic contributions. In 2011, the SILO adopted Convention 189, the first international human rights instrument protecting the rights of domestic workers. From 2011 to 2014, the Dignified Work (*Trabajo Digno*) program was launched in the region supported by funding from CARE UK. The program had two initial goals: (1) ensure the ratification of ILO Convention 189 and the alignment of national legal frameworks with international standards by strengthening regional and national associations and networks of paid domestic workers; (2) strengthen regional and national organizations for monitoring the enactment of policies regarding paid domestic work.

During this period, domestic workers' organizations in the region achieved important victories: In 2011, Bolivia, signed a national law on domestic workers' rights and declared March 30<sup>th</sup> as International Paid Domestic Workers' Day, a paid holiday for domestic workers. ILO Convention 189 was ratified by Uruguay (2012), Bolivia (2012), Nicaragua (2013), Guayana (2013), Paraguay (2013), Ecuador (2013), Costa Rica (2014), Colombia (2014), Argentina (2014), Chile (2015), Dominican Republic (2015), Brazil (2018) and Peru (2018). CARE's role as a supporter- particularly as a resource partner in funding the work in some of these countries and as an amplifier of this policy agenda in others - was critical in amplifying their policies and assisting the movement in making sure their victories were recognized.

In 2015, CARE LAC defined a regional strategy (Impact Growth Strategy) based on this work with the long-term goal of supporting 10 million domestic workers in the region to access social security, minimum wage and contracts with acceptable conditions by 2030. To achieve this goal, CARE LAC continued the work it started in 2011 and invested in strengthening movement organizations, facilitating opportunities for sharing knowledge and learning, and supporting the movement to gain greater political influence while connecting them across the region. As part of the program, three new strategies were added: 1) launching a communications campaigns to promote behavioral changes among employers; 2) support fundraising for partner organizations by using CARE's seed money to mobilize greater financial resources; and 3) evaluate the achievements made. Supporting the domestic workers' movement and its agenda in the region has become the very heart of the region's work. CARE LAC is currently continuing its work with the domestic workers' movement and has expanded this approach to other programmatic focuses, including indigenous people's rights and building resilient communities.



*Leaders of the domestic workers' movement and CARE staff gather in Quito in 2017 for a workshop to set their agenda and reflect on their collective narrative.*



These movement actors and our partnership made great contributions to global agendas, including with the recent adoption of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Domestic workers' movement actors contributed to the development, advocacy and influencing of ILO 190 leading up to its adoption at the country level and to the adoption as an international instrument that can change labor standards worldwide. The Latin American representatives not only took active engagement in the voting process at the International Labor Conference while 190 was discussed, but their lobbying and advocacy efforts were key in influencing the decision of employers and governments.

## Additional Resources

Below you will find an additional set of resources to contribute to your understanding of social movements in general and at CARE:

- Visit the Movement Strategy Center [here](#)
- Learn about the domestic workers movement in Latin America from the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing organization [here](#)
- Read the report by Rhize , “Understanding Activism: How International NGOs, Foundations, and Others can Provide Better Support to Social Movements [here](#).
- For more CARE-specific resources related to social movements, visit CARE’s internal Social Movements page [here](#).